

GWS Abstract 2009

Title: Final Results – Western Airborne Contaminants Assessment Project (WACAP)

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In 2008, the NPS Air Resources Division released results from the six-year, multi-agency Western Airborne Contaminants Assessment Project (WACAP). The findings indicated that airborne contaminants were detected at measurable levels in twenty western US and Alaskan national park ecosystems in various environmental indicators. While concentrations of most of the airborne contaminants detected were below levels of concern, others (e.g., mercury and DDT) appear to be accumulating in sensitive resources such as fish. In fact, some fish tested were found to have concentrations that exceeded fish-eating wildlife and/or human health consumption thresholds in all of the eight core parks studied. The evidence suggests that such toxic contaminants are carried in air masses from sources as far away as Asia, and as close as the local county. Results from this project add considerably to the state of the science concerning contaminant transport and subsequent biological and ecological effects in remote western US and Alaskan ecosystems.